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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5495  
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY  
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S E C R E T DAMASCUS 000755

NOFORN

FOR DS/IP, DS/TIA/ITA, NEA/ELA, NEA/EX, CA/OCS/ACS  
ABU DHABI FOR MCEG REGION TWO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/29/2028

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CASC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: DAMASCUS EAC - TEMPORARY CLOSURE THURSDAY FOR  
DEMONSTRATION(S)

REF: DAMASCUS 749 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Charge Maura Connelly for reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (S/NF) The Damascus Emergency Action Committee (EAC) met October 29 to assess Post's security profile in advance of possible demonstrations October 29 or 30. Charge chaired the meeting; A/DCM, RSO, A/PAO, CONS, GRPO, DAO, POL/ECON, MGT, MSGDETCMDR, and IMO attended.

12. (SBU) RSO briefed EAC on a planned demonstration by "parties and civil associations" (the SARG/Ba'ath Party apparatus), tentatively scheduled for 1700 hours local on October 30 at a landmark site approximately two miles from the Embassy. Based on past SARG practice, as many as several thousand students, teachers and civil servants may be "voluntold" to attend the event, which would be likely to involve well-coordinated groups of participants moving en masse by bus and/or on foot through the city to the demonstration site. This pre-event staging may place some groups of participants within 200 meters of the Embassy. RSO has requested that SARG authorities provide security support for all official facilities during the event, and Post will emphasize our expectations for security support via diplomatic note. Other EAC members provided further information indicating that other demonstrations were possible on October 29 (note: as of 1500 local, no demonstrations have been reported, but RSO has been advised that Damascus University students may be planning a separate protest at Omayyad Circle, a major traffic hub less than one kilometer from the Embassy, for 1200 hours on October 30).

13. (C/NF) EAC observed that notwithstanding the fact that the "planned" protest was scheduled to take place after working hours at a point distant from the Embassy, demonstrations are inherently unpredictable in their ability to pose a threat to Mission facilities and personnel. EAC members also took note of the SARG's heated anti-U.S. rhetoric following the reported U.S. military incursion into Syria, and assessed that one potential way in which the SARG could communicate its displeasure with the USG would be to provide less-than-enthusiastic security support during the demonstration. EAC members also recalled that subpar security support during the 2006 "Danish cartoon" riots and previous demonstrations-gone-wrong resulted in violence and significant damage to several western embassies in Damascus. EAC further noted that with the Physical Security Upgrade project in full swing, sections of the Chancery perimeter wall are more vulnerable to penetration by a hostile crowd than would be the case under normal circumstances.

14. (C/NF) In light of the concerns noted above, EAC agreed that the Embassy will close October 30, with only

mission-essential communications and security staff reporting for duty at the Chancery compound. Country Team members and other critical-needs staff will report for duty at the Alternate Command Center (DCMR). CONS will prepare a Warden Message in coordination with CA/OCS to advise the American community of this precautionary measure.

¶5. (SBU) Post will report septel with further developments on the SARG closure of the Damascus Community School and the Mission's Cultural Center.

¶6. (C) The EAC has decided to cancel representational events associated with November 4 U.S. elections. The EAC will re-consider the security arrangement for the November 21 Marine Ball closer to the date.  
CONNELLY